

Message Text

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14

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02

OMB-01 IO-11 EUR-12 EB-07 /090 W

----- 022275

R 191046Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4119

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 2533

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: ARRESTS

SUMMARY: THE ARRESTS IN TAMIL NADU AND THE DETENTION OF DEMONSTRATORS DURING THE NOVEMBER 14-JANUARY 20 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT SPONSORED BY THE OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE COMMITTEE (PSC) HAVE PROBABLY INCREASED THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS ARRESTED NATION WID SINCE THE EMERGENCY TO 100,000 AND PERHAPS MORE. WE ESTIMATE THAT 60,000 TO 80,000 MAY STILL BE IN JAIL. THE PSC ANNOUNCED THAT ITS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT WAS SUSPENDED IN RESPONSE TO INOBA BHAVE'S CALL FOR

A "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION." MRS GANDHI'S CONTINUED COMBATIVE POSTURE TOWARD THE OPPOSITION POINTS TO THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER ARRESTS OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. HER POLITICAL DECISIONS, SUCH AS WHETHER OR NOT TO DECLARE PRESIDENT'S RULE IN GUJARAT, WILL DETERMINE THE RATE OF INCREASE. A DECREASE COULD OCCUR IF SHE REVERSED FIELD AND BEGAN TO WORK SERIOUSLY FOR AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE OPPOSITION. WITH THE RELEASE OF THE RAJMATA OF

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GWALIER, WE ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF ARRESTED MPS HAS FALLEN

TO THIRTY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE ARRESTS IN TAMIL NADU SINCE THE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE AND THE DETENTION OF OVER 10,000 PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATORS DURING THE NOVEMBER 14-JANUARY 20 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT SPONSORED BY THE J.P. NARAYAN ORIENTED PEOPLES STRUGGLE COMMITTEE (PSC) HAVE PROBABLY INCREASED THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS ARRESTED NATIONWIDE SINCE THE EMERGENCY TO 100,000 AND PERHAPS MORE. WE ESTIMATE THAT 60,000 TO 80,000 MAY STILL BE IN JAIL. THE CHIEF SECRETARY OF UTTAR PRADESH TOLD A SWEDISH WORLD BANK OFFICIAL IN LATE JANUARY THAT ABOUT 35,000 PERSONS HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN HIS STATE ALONE SINCE THE EMERGENCY. IN TAMIL NADU, WE ESTIMATE THAT SOME 20,000 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DETAINED SINCE PRESIDENT'S RULE WAS DECLARED ON JANUARY 31. (ONE SENIOR GOI OFFICIAL IN TAMIL NADU TOLD CONSUL GENERAL EAVES FEB 16 THAT ALL BUT 2,480 DETAINEES HAVE BEEN RELEASED.) EMBASSY AND CONGEN CONSULAR OFFICERS REPORT THAT JAILS IN DELHI AND INDIA'S THREE MAJOR CITIES ARE OVERFLOWING EVEN BY INDIAN STANDARDS. A CONGEN CALCUTTA REPORT ON CALCUTTA'S PRESIDENCY JAIL STATES THAT OVERCROWDING HAS ALSO CREATED MEDICAL CARE PROBLEMS.

2. OVER 10,000 PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED DURING THE TWO MONTH PEACFUL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT CALLED OFF ON JAN 20. UNDERGROUND PSC LEADERS HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT THE MOVEMENT WAS TERMINATED IN RESPONSE TO VINOBA BHAVE'S "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION" APPEALS. IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT THE PSC'S PROGRESSIVELY DIMINISHING ABILITY TO MOBILIZE PARTICIPANTS TO COURT ARRESTS, AND A GENERAL DEMORALIZATION AMONG THE OPPOSITION OVER ITS OWN IMPOTENCE, WERE PROBABLY THE MAIN MOTIVATIONS FOR ITS TERMINATION. THE REPORTED FEB 12 ARREST OF PSC GENERAL SECRETARY, RAVINDRA VARMA, SHOULD FURHTER INCREASE DEMORALIZATION WITHIN OPPOSITION RANKS.

3. MRS. GANDHI'S CONTINUING COMBATIVE POSTURE TOWARD THE OPPOSITION POINTS TO THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER ARRESTS IN THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. HER POLITICAL DECISIONS, SUCH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS WHETHER OR NOT TO DECLARE PRESIDENT'S RULE IN GUJARAT, WILL DETERMINE THE RATE OF INCREASE. A DECREASE COULD OCCUR ONLY IF SHE REVERSED FIELD AND BEGAN TO WORK SERIOUSLY FOR AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE OPPOSITION.

4. THE RECENT RELEASE OF THE RAJMATA OF GWALIOR REDUCED THE NUMBER OF MPS IN JAIL TO 30. LIKE OTHER EX-PRINCES IN PARLIAMENT (DEWAS, PANNA, THE EX-MAHARAJA AND RAJMATA OF

JAIPUR), SHE HAS REPORTEDLY AGREED TO ABANDON POLITICS
AS A PRICE FOR HER FREEDOM.

5. COMMENT: IN NOVEMBER WE REPORTED THAT THE NUMBER OF
PERSONS IN JAIL MIGHT HAVE FALLEN TO 10-15,000. IN
RETROSPECT, THIS FIGURE (BASED ON A PRIVATE COMMENT BY A
FORMER SENIOR INDIAN SECURITY OFFICER TO AN OLD BRITISH
FRIEND) APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TOO LOW AS AN OVERALL NUMBER
FOR THOSE ARRESTED, ALTHOUGH IT MAY HAVE REPRESENTED THE
NUMBER OF POLITICIANS (DEFINED IN SOME UNCERTAIN WAY) IN
JAIL AT THAT TIME, AS OPPOSED TO "ECONOMIC OFFENDERS,"
ET AL. PART OF THE PROBLEM OF EVERYONE WORKING WITH "ARREST"
FIGURES IS IN DEFINING POLITICAL ARRESTS. MANY OF THOSE
SWEEPED UP HAVE BEEN SHOPKEEPERS, SUSPECTED SMUGGLERS,
PARTICIPANTS IN PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS, RANDOM INDIVIDUALS
GUILTY OF INDISCREET REMARKS, AND THUGS (WHO MAY HAVE
PARTICIPATED IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY ON THE SIDE). AS IN
TAMILNAD WHERE ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF THOSE ARRESTED
ARE SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL FIGURES, THE POLICE ELSEWHERE
HAVE ARRESTED MANY MORE SMALL-FRY, PART-TIMERS IN THE
POLITICAL GAME, THAN "BIG CHEESES," THE PURPOSES, HOWEVER,
HAVE BEEN TO DESTROY GRASSROOTS POLITICAL ACTIVITY AS WELL
AS POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE OPPOSITION. CONSEQUENTLY,
WE ARE RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THE OFFICIAL BREAKDOWNS OF
DETAINEES (WHICH ALSO VARY FROM STATE TO STATE) AND WE
ARE ALSO RELUCTANT TO ATTEMPT CATEGORIZING THEM
OURSELVES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TAMIL NADU, ARRESTS, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NEWDE02533
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760063-0345
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760235/aaaabeb1.tel
Line Count: 143
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 JUN 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <02 JUL 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARRESTS SUMMARY: THE ARRESTS IN TAMIL NADU AND THE DETENTION OF
TAGS: PINT, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006